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ABSTRACT

The Teacher Centered Professional Development Program of the National Education Association (NEA) was officially announced in January 1973. Thirteen potential teacher center sites have been identified. Before September 1, 1974, a final decision will be made on those state and local education associations that will work with the NEA in a demonstration program of teacher involvement in the area of in-service teacher education. NEA will not supply outside funds; it is a basic NEA tenet that public funds--not teachers' dues--must be used to finance programs of continuing professional development. NEA is, however, committed to provide the designated sites with a wide range of consultative services in the "substantive" areas--assessment of what constitutes meaningful in-service teacher education from a teacher's point of view, assistance in the conceptual design of such a program and development of alternative training strategies--and in the neighborhood of "bargaining" aspects of securing officially recognized, meaningful involvement. NEA will give the selected sites the widest possible visibility as examples for other associations to follow. (Author/JA)

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# TEACHER CENTERED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

An NEA/IPD program to focus attention on the need . . . and the opportunity . . . for state and local associations to assist members in gaining a larger measure of meaningful influence over their own continuing professional development.

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# WHY THE NEA PROMOTES TEACHER CENTERED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

If ever the accepted spelling for teacher centers becomes "teachers' center," it will mean that the NEA concept of a teacher center has prevailed. "Teachers' center" connotes an assembling of--and/or a place where--teachers learn more about teaching. It implies a planning, program, and administrative process in which teachers have more than simply the right to participate in a continuing education program, once a program has been established. A teachers' center implies proprietary planning rights.

And this is where the NEA teacher centered professional development program comes in.

The program was officially announced to state and local education associations in January of 1973. A "Prospectus" was sent to association leadership describing the NEA concept of continuing personal professional growth and providing an opportunity for those associations interested in participating in a lighthouse program to submit applications.

Thirteen potential teacher center sites have been identified. Before September 1, 1974, a final decision will be made on those state and local education associations which will work with the NEA in a demonstration program of teacher involvement in the area of in-service education.

The process of selection will be in two phases. Phase I, to operate generally between September 1, 1973, and April 1974, will be designed to provide applicants with the consultative and advisory help they may need to make them viable candidates for selection. The second phase will be identifying those sites that--as a result of their planning and exploration work in Phase I--elect to intensively continue in the program. In these experimental sites, the NEA will not supply outside funds. It is a basic NEA tenet that public funds--not teachers' dues--must be used to finance programs of continuing professional development.

The NEA is committed, however, in the lighthouse sites, to provide a wide range of consultative services in the "substantive" areas--assessment of what constitutes meaningful in-service education from the teacher's point of view, assistance in the conceptual design of such a program, development of alternative training strategies--and in the negotiation or "bargaining" aspects of securing officially recognized, meaningful involvement.

The NEA will give the selected sites the widest possible visibility as examples for other associations to follow. In those NEA teacher centered professional development sites operating at the state level, the NEA plans to work with state association leadership in helping them perfect services to those local education associations within the states which demonstrate an in-

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terest in wanting to help teachers gain increased involvement in the development of effective professional development programs.

This is teacher advocacy. The NEA teacher centered professional development program is based on the demonstrated principles that effective motivation, self-direction, and realistic self-evaluation grow out of having responsibility for goal setting and planning and the opportunity to design and implement programs that lead toward goal attainment. This is good teaching. It is good continuing professional development. It is what the NEA approach to teacher centered professional development is all about.

NEA/IPD is also beginning planning for a possible National Support Center designed to influence and upgrade all aspects of continuing professional development. Details of the proposal will be developed during the 1973-74 fiscal year.

## Basic Assumptions

The basic assumptions supporting the NEA teacher centered professional development program are the following:

1. The cost of providing opportunities for continuing in-service education is a "cost of doing business." Teachers should not be required to rely exclusively upon the expenditure of their own funds to maintain or improve their job competence; they should not invariably be required to use their own time to learn how to do their jobs better.

2. Every precept of learning demonstrates that skill improvement, the maturation of concepts, and any significant advance in personal and professional growth arise out of the active and meaningful participation of those to be involved in making decisions about their growth patterns. Lasting and effective professional development therefore requires that teachers have a dominant role in developing processes relating to their own continuing professional development.

3. Decisions about the expenditure of public funds for continuing professional development cannot be left to the intuitive knowledge of individuals or clusters of individuals whose primary responsibilities are external to the classroom. These decisions must be based on a systematic needs assessment program oriented toward the entire instructional staff. The program developed to meet accurately assessed needs must be designed to meet a wide range of experience, sophistication in directing the learning process, and individual interest.

4. Teacher involvement in professional development programs will not take place unless this cause is championed and actively pursued by the teachers' professional associations.

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5. With so many fronts to cover, state and local teachers' associations cannot be expected to automatically make teacher involvement in professional development a high priority. It is, therefore, an obligation of the NEA to use all of the means at its disposal to advocate this facet of teacher advocacy.

## Action Steps for Locals

While direct NEA participation in stimulating teacher centered in-service education is necessarily restricted to but a few pilot sites, the procedures for working toward this goal are widely applicable. NEA/IPD recommends that local associations interested in securing a larger measure of member involvement in their own in-service education plan a day-and-a-half to two-day workshop designed to do the following:

1. Identify as clearly as possible the long-range goals. Specifically, where--at the end of a three - five-year period--does the association want to be in terms of its measure of influence over the content, sponsorship, and governance of all programs of professional development--including sabbatical leaves and teacher exchange programs.

2. Outline in some detail the specific strategies required to attain the goal.

NEA/IPD recommends that the workshop begin with a general session designed to identify long range goals. Sometimes this can best be done by an analysis of what teachers have found meaningful--and less than meaningful--in the in-service programs they themselves have participated in. Following this, it has been found useful for sub-groups to meet around each of the following components of the total plan: (a) assured continuing commitment on the part of the association's governance to the concept of teacher centered professional development, (b) necessary negotiation procedures, (c) public information requirements, (d) needs assessment procedures, (e) kinds and varieties of the methods and learning experiences useful to teachers in their own professional development.

The final part of the workshop would be a general session at which the reports from the sub-groups would be welded into a single long-range, step-by-step action program.

Obviously, to make such planning realistic, ranking members of the association's governance, negotiations, public relations, and instruction committees must have key roles in planning and conducting the workshops. Consultants from the state association will, of course, be helpful. Requests for further assistance from NEA should be directed to: Teacher Centered Professional Development, NEA/IPD, at the address on the cover of this report.